



# Saint Louis Audubon

## BULLETIN

November, 1967

Vol. 36, No. 1

Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington Aves.

### "A PLACE IN THE SUN"

DORIS G. BOYD

Friday, November 17, 1967 — 8:15 P.M.

Very early in her life, Doris Boyd was introduced to the beauties of her natural surroundings in rural New England. Brought up in an outdoor camping family, she soon learned to love the out-of-doors and to observe the magnificent panorama of nature and the myriad tiny details that make is a never-ending source of wonder and delight.

After graduation from college, and a short period of teaching, she married a young naturalist. Together they took additional courses in the natural sciences and conservation, including Audubon Nature Camp programs; they participated in the work of nature study societies, and led nature, conservation and craft courses.

*A Place in the Sun* covers three different ecological areas found within a few miles, and sometimes within a few feet, of each other. In each habitat, Doris Boyd reveals to viewers the plant and animal life found there, and discusses the development and interdependence of each area upon the others.

The Pine Barrens, with oak-pine forests, "forgotten" towns, cedar and cranberry bogs, and dark brown cedar waters are a veritable wonderland for botanists. Here, in colorful close-up, are such flowers as the dainty pyxie moss, turkey's beard, and bird's foot violet. Left by the glaciers are the sphagnum moss, Hudsonia, and bearberry. The famous carnivorous plants, the sundews and pitcher plants are found here also.

The fresh and salt water marshes and meadows teem with bird and animal life. Almost fifty species of birds are pictured in dramatic close-up. Many are shown in unusual activities — a herring gull catching and working on an eel, swan cygnets riding on their parent's back, and snowy egrets hunting for food in the shallow waters.

Finally we arrive at the shore, quite different from the first two habitats, but tied to them by sand, sun, and water. Congregations of shore birds gather by the thousands in May to devour the freshly laid eggs of the horse-shoe crabs. The least tern incubates her eggs in a depression on the shell-strewn sandy beach, while the piping plover hatches her brood in the late afternoon sun. Black skimmers "skim" back and forth across the surface of the water scooping up small fish, and mole crabs quickly bury themselves

in the sandy beach to escape being washed out to sea.

*A Place in the Sun* brings to life the rare and haunting beauty of what at first glance may seem to be a forbidding and bleak land. It points up clearly the values of our Atlantic coastal barrens areas, and stresses the need to preserve them.

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## **WILDLIFE FILM PROGRAMS**

For the benefit of those who have not retained the folder listing the entire year's schedule, we append herewith the dates and places of the remaining programs:

Friday, January 12, 1968  
Friday, February 23, 1968  
Tuesday, March 12, 1968\*  
Friday, March 29, 1968  
Tuesday, April 9, 1968\*

\*These programs to be held at Clayton High School. All remaining programs to be held at Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington.

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## **PITZMAN PROGRAM — SHAW'S GARDEN JUNE 20, 1967 — AUGUST 24, 1967**

By LANIER CRIGER

The time was 10:00 A.M., June 20, 1967, the opening day of the Pitzman ornithology program at Shaw's Garden. The day was warm and bright and began with the enrollment of 405 children — 185 children for the first term and 220 for the second term — and with only three teachers for such a large number.

In order to make the classes interesting and educational we used two 16MM color films during the programs, one being "The Life of John James Audubon" and the other "The Life of the Bob White". These two films, along with guest speakers secured by Martin Schweig, speakers well acquainted with the classes and proficient in their own subjects such as given by Bill Brush and Katie Ketchvoldoff. Bill Brush was no stranger to the children, having been with them as a teacher in the 1965 classes. Katie Nethvolodoff, along with Bill, did a wonderful job in showing the red tailed hawk and the barred owl and delighted the children when they explained how these two birds of prey live in the wilds.

A very interesting slide show named "The High Country of Colorado" was shown by ecologist Mark Paddock. His program on weather, timber, plants, and animals of the high country was breathtaking and, being such an unusual subject for the children to see, delighted them very much. The seniors seemed to get more from the picture and the lecture than did the juniors (ages 7 to 11). Another show the children really liked was a slide show produced by Arthur A. Allen and David G. Allen of Cornell University — "The Home Life of Birds", and borrowed from the National Council of

Garden Clubs. Both juniors and seniors were spellbound by the subject matter and by the superb photography. It was very gratifying to watch the children's reaction to the slides.

The Missouri Conservation Commission furnished the classes their Agent Weidemann for a session and the children were elated when Mr. Weidemann asked them if they knew the difference between a purple martin and a starling. The reference being, of course, the inadvertant killing of almost 2,000 purple martins on the grounds of the mansion occupied by the Governor of Missouri, at Jefferson City, Missouri. The children realized that had the five men involved in the tragic incident had the advantages of Pitzman-Audubon training, the slaughter of these very valuable birds would have never have happened.

As usual we studied the lives and habits of the summer birds, the winter birds, the birds of prey and the game birds. We had our quota of bird walks; but sorry to say, we didn't see too many species. As the garden becomes more park like, and more formal, the less birds we have. We had our little green heron near the pond. But the wild habitat is getting less and less each year. We don't have the red wing black bird in numbers since the shrinkage of the cat tail patch near the pond. We still see swifts, swallows and crows overhead, the usual abundance of robins, cardinals, a few cat birls, a few quail, starlings, the yellow throat and a few doves, a mocking bird or two, but not the water bird nests as in the past. We saw a few night hawks flying, one shore bird, the last week of the program. These birds are the usual variety, but as the brushy, protected habitat retreat before the formal garden and well kept park, these birds will be the only feathered inhabitants of the garden.

Without our faithful teachers, we couldn't have had an Audubon program. Mrs. Marian Higgins, a Girl Scout Leader, was with us again this year, also Mr. Henry Pelzo, St. Louis University Seminary student. They taught the first term. Miss Sarah Owen and a newcomer, Mrs. Helen Hill, taught the second term. Mrs. Hill is an old time member of the Audubon Society and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society. Miss Owen is a veteran teacher in the St. Louis System and in the Pitzman Program. Without Miss Owen, we just couldn't make it\*. We wish we could interest other talented people in our teaching program, but we manage to make it interesting to the children from year to year. It is interesting to see how many children come back to our classes term after term. Bill Voelker, a former member of the Pitzman classes, was a very able assistant the last term of 1967 season. Some of our children's mothers often act as assistants and it is remarkable how orderly the classes are.

This year was a nature teachers dream, cool, sunny and not too hectic. One doesn't exactly relax with 405 children, but it still is fun.

Summer wouldn't be summer without songs of birds, the different insect sounds and the exuberant hum of busy, happy children. I visited the Garden after Labor day, it was sunny, cool, and strangely peaceful. The beauty was there as always, but not the fun. That belongs to summer and to childhood.

\*Miss Owen was the recipient of a Camp Scholarship Award from St. Louis Audubon Society as a result of her early interest in this work.

# Lessons In Oneupmanship

## "THAT'S MY FIRST MARBLED GODWIT!"

By JOHN PETERSON

Reprinted with permission from the Oct. 9, 1967 National Observer

To the unlettered and uninitiated, birdwatching generally calls to mind images of a rather absent-minded gentility, of tweeds and sensible shoes worn by women who might also give china-painting lessons and men fumbling with ancient telescopes.

But bird-watching is, in fact, one of the most relentless, cutthroat, and competitive forms of oneupmanship known to man. Listen to a slender high-school senior holding forth at a monthly meeting I attended of the Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society: "I was at the River Road turf farm two days ago and saw 20 golden plovers, about 35 killdeer, and one buffbreasted sandpiper."

A gray-haired lady sitting directly behind me stood to interject without really interrupting: "Well, I was there this afternoon and there were only about six golden plovers, but," she paused dramatically and smiled sweetly, "I saw *two* buff-breasted sandpipers." The 60-bird-watchers murmured their appreciation.

After the meeting Carl Carlson, one of the society's directors, cornered me conspiratorially. "Don't tell a soul. We're after the great white heron this week end at Chincoteague and if we're not careful we'll have 12 carloads of people down there with us. It's a real coup to add a bird to a state's list," he continued, "you know, to be the first to identify a great white heron in Virginia." He contemplated the rewards of such a *tour de force* with satisfaction. "Oh boy, would that ever stir up ol' J. J. Murray." J. J. Murray is a luminary in the Virginia Ornithological Society. Thus did I become party to a Maryland bird-watchers' raid into Virginia territory.

In addition to a competitive spirit of the sort that makes football players respond to coaches' urges to "run through a wall," there are other characteristics by which the bird watcher can be identified. They include an encyclopedic knowledge, a steel-traplike memory, eyesight that can practically see through walls, a radarlike instinct for the presence of a bird, inexhaustible energy, and a dedication and devotion to the task that is as limitless as the ocean.

Especially dedication and devotion. The Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge on Virginia's portion of Assateague Island is 180 miles southeast of Washington, D. C. Five of us rendezvoused at Mr. Carlson's home at 6:15 a.m. Saturday and it soon became clear that this ornithological commando raid was no ordinary "birding" expedition: It was decided that there was no time to stop for early-morning coffee. There was time along the way for five other stops, however — to look at three turkey vultures, a "V" of Canadian geese, a flock of ducks, and a bunch of sea gulls.

But not too many stops. We needed to get there while the tide would still be out, leaving the great white heron, the largest of all North American herons, on the exposed mudflats where unconfirmed reports had placed it. The heron is a common bird in Florida, has been spotted in the Carolinas, once in Pennsylvania, but never before in Virginia.

As we got closer to Chincoteague, the tension mounted. "We're going to have to take notes on every feather of this fellow to wipe out all of the skepticism," Mr. Carlson said. Chincoteague is loaded with three species of egrets that look much like the great white heron but aren't quite as large. It would

be something like distinguishing between the male and female hippie.

The tide was in when we started across the causeway to Chincoteague. Patches of water covered much of the reedy mudflats on either side of the road. We were about two-thirds across the causeway when George Lowe, in the back seat, yelled that there were big white birds off to the left.

One bird in particular, larger than the rest, attracted our attention. Reeds covered his spindly legs, making identification impossible. Finally the bird flapped its immense wings and rose to do a soft-shoe above the reeds. "Blacker than mud!" sighed Mr. Carlson. The fraud was an American egret with black legs and only a five-foot wingspan; the great white heron's would be six-foot.

"Let's have a contest to see who can guess how many different species of birds we'll see today," offered Mort Levy, who was converted to bird-watching but two years ago.

"We birders are great competitors when it comes to contests, lists, counts, well, any kind of statistics," explained Lowe, a birder since 1941. I know there isn't a birder who doesn't have a life list — all the different species he's ever seen." In the United States there are more than 600 species. The life list is a measure of prestige. The best amateur birders have more than 500 on theirs; Mr. Carlson's approached 400.

We passed through the small city of Chincoteague and pulled off the road onto a point jutting into an inlet. We were standing beside the car scouting the reeds about 300 yards offshore with our binoculars when I learned another characteristic of the dedicated birder: They do not have poker faces. Mr. Carlson, an easy-going, heavy-set, mustachioed man, quietly pulled his telescope out of the trunk and trained it on a bird floating in the reeds. It may have been like being with Balboa when he first saw the Pacific Ocean.

"A marbled godwit," he said unsuccessfully trying to keep the excitement out of his voice. Mr. Levy didn't even try. He grabbed Mr. Carlson's telescope and peered at the cinnamon-colored bird that is common in the West, rare in the East. "That's my first marbled godwit!" he yelled.

One has to go birding to learn how many birders there are. We ran into people with binoculars and telescopes from California, New Jersey, Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts. Always there was the same question, "What have you seen and where?"

Bird-watching is often the first step toward becoming a conservationist or naturalist, and the birders, the hobbyists, are losing influence to conservationists and naturalists in the bird-watching societies. "We look at birding as the frosting," Mr. Carlson explained. "You get interested in birds and wonder why you don't see as many robins today as you used to. It turns out DDT is killing many, just as it is threatening the bald eagle. It becomes an obligation to work toward preserving all species, their habitats. Then it's just a step farther to get involved in projects such as saving the redwoods or an area that should be a state park."

By this time we were a half-mile from the sandy beach of the Atlantic. "Looks like a great place for shore birds," exclaimed Mr. Carlson, as he again pulled over to stop. It was. We were zeroing in on some plovers, both golden and semi-palmated, when Levy suddenly was shouting. "A yellow-headed blackbird! Over there! A yellow-headed blackbird!" And Lowe and Carlson and Simonson were shouting back, "You're nuts!" Levy was pointing into some brush about 30 yards off the road. For a solid two minutes we all studied the undergrowth. "By golly! He's right!" said Lowe.

Immediately we were shifting from binoculars to telescopes to better study the rare find. "This is one for my life list," echoed Don Simonson and George Lowe. "He's only yellow on the front of his head and around the

neck. Man, there's only about one of these spotted each year in this part of the country," said Simonson.

First the marbled godwit and now a yellow-headed blackbird. That's a tough act to follow even for the great white heron, although our failure to sight him was a disappointment.

As exciting as it is with the amateurs, bird-watching takes on a new dimension when one is out with the professionals. Bird-watchers have their Mickey Mantles and Willie Mayses and Harmon Killebrews. They're always talking about Roger Tory Peterson, who wrote the authoritative field guide for the bird-watcher, and Chandler Robbins, Bertel Bruun, and Herbert Zim, who just last year published a new field guide. John J. Audubon, of course, is the Babe Ruth of birding.

It was long past sundown when we finally got back to Washington, D. C. The commando raid into Virginia had not succeeded, and J. J. Murray would never know what a threat we had been to him. We had seen 86 species, however, and no one was disheartened.

"You know Carl," Simonson began, "the wind is just right tonight to head down to the Washington Monument to see if any of the migrating birds are being attracted by the spotlights." Mr. Carlson looked at me with a big grin. "How about it? Got time to get in a little more birding tonight?" We had only been at it for 15 hours, but I had no reason to assume that he wasn't serious. If he wasn't, I grant him the maneuver. One up, game, love. I know when I'm out of my league.



## **SPRING AND SUMMER BIRDS IN THE ST. LOUIS AREA**

By J. EARL COMFORT

During the spring season St. Louis area birders were heartened by experiencing indications of one of the earliest springs on record in March and April with unprecedented warm days. This resulted in heavy foliage and flowers in bloom some 2 to 3 weeks earlier than normal. But the weather later did an about face with well below normal temperatures until late in May. Because of the early foliage early warblers and some other early species that usually arrive before the leafing were hard to spot. Most late arriving warblers were behind schedule and were sighted with difficulty in the heavy foliage nourished by 14 successive wet week ends that handicapped bird watchers. There was exceptionally good shorebirding.

The spring season gave us some excellent rarities topped by a scissor-tailed flycatcher found by a Webster Groves Nature Study hike group on the Illinois Mississippi River levees below the Jefferson Barracks Bridge on May 20. This first record for the area bird was first sighted by Jim Ruschill. Kathryn Arhos recorded a red-necked grebe at the Alton Dam on April 17th and it was again spotted there the following day by Dick Anderson. A western tanager was located on the Forest Park walk on May 7th, verified by Earl

Hath. Some other good finds were eared grebe, Hudsonian Godwit, avocet, willet, buff-breasted sandpiper and yellow-headed blackbird. Paul Bauer originally found the grebe, the godwit is credited to Kathryn Arhos, the avocet to Sally Vasse and the blackbird to Bob Guenther and others.

As of June first our birding resulted in listing 35 warbler species, 32 in the finch family, 27 shorebirds and 22 kinds of ducks. Among the St. Louis Audubon activities were 4 Forest Park bird walks for beginners, 2 at Shaw's Garden, also for beginners, the annual May roundup of bird species and 9 hikes at the Shaw's Garden Arboretum. A composite list of 255 area species had been compiled through many hours of diligent checking.

One of our highlights was the picnic and Nature hike at the famous Leonard and Virginia Hall Possum Trot Farm south of Caledonia, Mo., for St. Louis Audubon board members and their families on May 20th. Len and Ginnie and Shannon, their Irish Setter, gave us a royal welcome. The hike, led by Len, produced more ticks than birds, but no one complained. A visit to Possum Trot is always remembered with pleasure.

After the usual summer vacation season lull, birding picked up in the St. Louis area, resulting in 2 exceptionally rare species. On September 28th when Sally Vasse found an accidental Sabine's gull in Calhoun County, Illinois, at Swan Lake of the Calhoun Unit of the U. S. Wildlife Refuge she passed the word around by phone, enabling Dick Anderson and Paul Bauer to list the rarity later in the day.

On the 30th Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Schaefer and daughter Lynn found an adult male vermilion flycatcher with 3 females or immature birds of the same species at a lake at the August A. Busch Memorial Wildlife Area in St. Charles County. After this information had been phoned to Bertha Massie, Bertha relayed the good birding news to various interested birders, many of whom assembled at the vermilion lake site on the following day where the coveted listing was made with various degrees of ease since the large lake offered the flycatcher an extended feeding range.

Some 2 weeks later Dr. Ralph Laffey found the male vermilion was still there after many fruitless trips. Perseverance had paid off. With this news to spur them on Kathryn Arhos and Helen Hill checked the bird there on the lucky Friday, the 13th.

On the next day Earl Hath and I searched the lake where, to our delight, Earl soon located our quarry. To make the day complete we later found a rare sharp-tailed sparrow in a marshy Busch area near the lake that had attracted the vermilion.

Both rare species (Sabine's gull and vermilion flycatcher) were far off their usual range and both were only second modern records for St. Louis.

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**9912 Clayton Road**

**WYdown 3-2222**

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# ST. LOUIS AUDUBON BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY

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